

Amendments to the Drawings:

The sheet attached to the Appendix includes a new Fig. 9 per the Examiner's request. Fig. 9 illustrates a ratchet wheel including directionally oriented notches, each notch having a cam remote from the second anchoring line attachment means. No new matter has been added. Applicant respectfully requests that the objection with regard to the drawings be withdrawn.

REMARKS

Claims 17, 18, 24-30, and 32-42 are now pending in this application. Claims 1-16, 19-23, and 31 have been canceled without prejudice or disclaimer. Claims 32-42 have been newly added. Support for these claims can be found *e.g.*, on page 16, lines 4-19, and Figs. 8A and 8B. Claim 17 has been amended. In particular, the limitations from claim 23 have been incorporated into claim 17. Editorial revisions have been made to claims 24-30. No new matter has been added. Applicant respectfully requests examination and allowance of claims 17, 18, 24-30, and 32-42.

Objections to the Drawings

The drawings have been objected to under 37 C.F.R. 1.83(a) for not showing the cams of each directionally oriented notch on a ratchet wheel being remote from a second anchoring line attachment means. In response, Applicant submits new Fig. 9 showing such a ratchet wheel. Support for this drawing can be found, *e.g.*, on page 13, lines 1-10. No new matter has been added. Applicant respectfully requests that the objection to the figures be withdrawn.

Objections to the Claims

Claims 2, 5, 10, 11, 15-17, 19, 24, 25, 27, and 29-31 have been objected to due to informalities. Claims 2, 5, 10, 11, 15, 16, 19, and 31 have been canceled without prejudice or disclaimer, thereby rendering the objection with respect to these claims moot. Editorial revisions have been made to claims 17, 24, 25, 27, 29, and 30 in order to correct the informalities noted by the Examiner. No new matter has been added. As these amendments were not made to overcome art rejections, they should not be construed as limiting. Applicant respectfully submits that the pending claims are now in condition for allowance.

Section 112 Rejections

Claims 17-30 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite. Regarding claim 17, the rejection questions how the drive part can be pivotably attached to the pivot lever when the drive part is slidably attached to the pivot lever in claim 26. Claims 18-30 have been rejected for depending upon an indefinite base claim. Applicant has

considered the Examiner's comments and appropriate correction has been made. In particular, the term pivotably has been deleted from claim 17 so as to avoid a conflict with claim 26. Therefore, Applicants respectfully request allowance of claims 17-30. Applicants note that the amendment discussed above was not made for the purposes of traversing an art rejection and so should not be construed as limiting.

Section 102 Rejections

Claim 31 has been rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by German reference DE 3017371 (hereinafter "'371"). Applicant traverses this rejection. However, claim 31 has been canceled without prejudice or disclaimer, thereby rendering the rejection moot. Applicant does not otherwise concede the correctness of this rejection and reserve the right to make additional arguments if necessary.

Section 103 Rejections

Claims 1-5, 7, 10-12, 14, 16-19, 21, 24-26, 28, and 30 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being obvious over German reference '371 in view of *Dolezych* (EP 311,828, hereinafter "'828"). Applicant respectfully traverses the rejection. However, claims 1-5, 7, 10-12, 14, 16, 19, and 21 have been canceled without prejudice or disclaimer, thereby rendering the rejection with respect to these claims moot. The features of claim 23 have been incorporated into claim 17. Regarding claims 17, 18, 24-26, 28, and 30, Applicant respectfully submits the following comments.

Claims 18, 24-26, 28, and 30 depend from claim 17. Claim 17 recites, in part, a bi-directional tensioning device for tensioning an anchoring line and a threadable line. The tensioning device includes a first and second anchoring line attachment means at remote ends of the device, a blocking mechanism, and a rotatable drive element. The tensioning device further includes a first and second guide means serving to aid in winding the threadable line. The first guide means is spaced next to the blocking mechanism and guides the threadable line over the blocking mechanism. The second guide means includes a support surface and is spaced between the second anchoring line attachment means and the rotatable drive element.

German reference '371 fails to disclose or suggest a first and second guide means both having the structures and serving the functions recited in claim 17. In fact, guide means are not

disclosed at all in the '371 reference. Furthermore, while reference '828 discloses three guide means, the structures and functions of the guide means differ from the structures and functions of the guide means disclosed in claim 17. In particular, two of the guide means in the '371 reference are positioned directly below the first and second anchor line attachment means. The third guide means is positioned below the blocking mechanism and guides the threadable line to thread underneath the blocking mechanism. In fact, the tensioning device in reference '828 is arranged and configured such that guiding the threadable line to thread over the blocking mechanism would leave the threadable line unprotected by the body of the tensioning device and would potentially interfere with operation of the drive part.

In addition, the '828 reference fails to disclose or suggest a guide means including a support surface. Rather, the '828 reference discloses a cylindrical guide means mirroring the first guide means. The rejection cites U.S. patent 5,832,569 to *Berg* (hereinafter "'569") as disclosing a support surface acting as a guide for a strap. Applicant points out that reference '569 is directed towards a buckle for a belt and not towards a ratcheting device. Furthermore, the function of the buckle disclosed in reference '569 is vastly different from the function of the ratcheting device recited in claims 1 and 17. The invention in reference '569 functions to hold a belt around a person's waist and, therefore, will encounter only a minimal amount of stress. In contrast, the present invention is used to secure loads to a flatbed for transportation. In order to safely secure the load to the flatbed, a great amount of tension is required, and so the tensioning device must be capable of enduring quite a bit of stress. Therefore, a person having skill in the tensioning device art would not look towards a belt buckle for suggestions on modifying the tensioning device.

Therefore, for at least these reasons, reference '371 would not lead a person having skill in the art to the invention of claim 17 even in view of the '828 reference. Claims 18, 24-26, 28, and 30 depend from claim 17 and are allowable for at least the same reasons. Applicant does not otherwise concede the correctness of this rejection and reserve the right to make additional arguments if necessary.

Claims 6 and 20 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being obvious over reference '371 in view of reference '828 as applied to claims 5 and 19 and further in view of *Speich* (U.S. 4,584,742, hereinafter "'742"). Applicant traverses this rejection. However, claims

6 and 20 have been canceled without prejudice or disclaimer, thereby rendering this rejection moot. Applicant does not otherwise concede the correctness of this rejection.

Claims 13, 15, 27, and 29 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being obvious over reference '371 in view of reference '828 as applied to claims 2, 12, 17, and 26, and further in view of *Huang* (U.S. 5,778,496, hereinafter "'496"). Applicant respectfully traverses this rejection. However, claims 13 and 15 have been canceled without prejudice or disclaimer, thereby rendering the rejection with respect to these claims moot. Regarding claims 27 and 29, Applicant submits the following comments.

Claims 27 and 29 depend from claim 17. Therefore, claims 27 and 29 are allowable over reference '371 and reference '828 for at least the same reasons as discussed above with respect to claim 17. Furthermore, reference '496 does not overcome the shortcomings of reference '371 and reference '828. Reference '496 does not disclose or suggest a second anchoring line attachment means and also does not suggest a second guide means spaced between the second anchoring line attachment means and the rotatable drive element. Furthermore, reference '496 does not disclose or suggest a guide means including a support surface. Therefore, for at least these reasons, reference '371 would not lead a person having skill in the art to the invention of claim 17 even in view of reference '828 and reference '496. Claims 27 and 29 are allowable for at least the same reasons. Applicant does not otherwise concede the correctness of this rejection and reserve the right to make additional arguments if necessary.

Claims 8, 9, 22, and 23 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being obvious over reference '371 in view of reference '828 as applied to claims 2 and 17, and further in view of *Berg* (U.S. 5,832,569, hereinafter "'569"). For at least the same reasons as discussed above with respect to claim 17, Applicant respectfully traverses this rejection. However, claims 8, 9, 22, and 23 have been canceled without prejudice or disclaimer, thereby rendering the rejection moot. Applicant does not otherwise concede the correctness of this rejection.

New Claims

Claims 32-42 have been newly added. Claim 34 recites, in part, a bi-directional tensioning device for tensioning a threadable line including at least one ratchet wheel and a blocking mechanism for engaging the ratchet wheel. The ratchet wheel includes directionally oriented notches and the blocking mechanism includes a handle attached to a blocking pawl.

This configuration is advantageous in that a user may use the handle to manually release the threadable line from the ratchet wheel one notch at a time (i.e., "tooth-by-tooth"). Due to the large amount of tensioning force stored in the ratchet system during operation, simply releasing the threadable line all at once can be dangerous for an operator. The released force may cause the ratcheting device to strike either the operator or the load that was being secured by the threadable line, thereby causing damage. By manually releasing one notch at a time, an operator may safely alleviate some of the tensioning force in the system before completely releasing the threadable line.

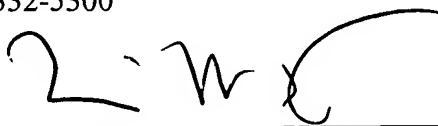
None of the references cited by the Examiner disclose or suggest such a handle or the motivation for providing such a handle. Furthermore, none of the references cited by the Examiner disclose or suggest the ability to manually release the threadable line from the ratchet wheel one notch at a time or the advantages in doing so. Therefore, none of these references anticipate and none would lead a person having skill in the art to the invention of claim 34. Claims 35-42 depend from claim 34 and are allowable for at least the same reasons.

Claim 32 recites, in part, a method for partially releasing a threadable line from a tensioning device. The tensioning device includes a blocking mechanism having a handle. Therefore, claim 32 is allowable for at least the same reasons as discussed above with respect to claim 34. Claim 33 depends from claim 32 and is allowable for at least the same reasons. Applicant respectfully requests examination and allowance of claims 32-42.

In view of the above amendments and remarks, Applicant respectfully requests a Notice of Allowance. If the Examiner believes a telephone conference would advance the prosecution of this application, the Examiner is invited to telephone the undersigned at the below-listed telephone number.

Respectfully submitted,

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